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To Whom It May Concern,

I fully support the NCDOT grant application for bridge replacements. Most of the bridges on this list flood between three to six times per year and can critically impact emergency services access and potentially endanger personnel attempting to reach isolated individuals experiencing an emergency.

While local residents are aware of the flooding potential and its associated dangers, Ashe County has experienced a significant increase in vacation rentals over the last two years. As a result there has been a noted increase in public assistance requests from stranded vacationers due to weather events and instances of attempts to drive across flooded bridges. Statistics indicate that these types of incidents and requests will continue to increase putting additional strain on an already overtaxed response system. Raising low water bridges above flood level would help alleviate some of the requests for assistance and would lower the risk to responders.

I've summarized the impacts of some of the issues created by bridge flooding below, starting with the bridges that are the most critical in terms of emergency services to replace:

Bridge 040477 on Brown Road has the potential to have a very serious impact. Each time that bridge floods, which is three to six times per year, there are 52 homes that become isolated. The majority of the homeowners are elderly and have a high potential for needing medical assistance at any given time. Should a medical emergency occur within the subdivision, responders would have to use a rugged overgrown route (with special permission from a property owner for emergency services use only) that is accessed from across a nearby mountain. This back way in is not open to residents as an ingress/egress, requires use of a four wheel drive all-terrain vehicle for access and would add at least an hour to medical response time. Ambulances, fire engines, tankers and law enforcement patrol vehicles would not be able to access the area.

Bridges 040047, 040048, and 040304 are along the same stretch of roadways and all flood several times a year. When they all flood at the same time it creates a situation where a significant number of people along Helton Road, Big Helton Road and Jim Duvall Road are isolated on both sides. It is impossible for emergency services to effectively reach the 49 homes in this area, even with the use of all-terrain vehicles.

When flooded, Bridge 040351 on North Fulton Reeves Road adds approximately 15 minutes to the response times for residents in approximately 30 homes along North Fulton Reeves Road and W.A. Reed Road. In addition, the alternate route is along a one lane dirt road which

could create additional hazards during a fire response. When the bridges on both ends of the road flood, it leaves these homes isolated with no emergency services access.

Bridge 040466 on Boggs Road impacts a number of homeowners as well as a camp that provides services to terminally ill children. During flooding, the camp is inaccessible and response times to this area are increased by approximately 10 minutes down a winding narrow dirt road.

Flooding on bridge 040343 on Double Springs Church Road affects 11 homes and increases the emergency response time by approximately 10 minutes.

Flooding on bridge 040183 on Upper Cranberry Creek Road isolates three homes and extends emergency response times to other areas by approximately five minutes.

Flooding on Bridge 040226 on Liberty Grove Church Roads extends response times to a significant number of homes by approximately 10 minutes.

When bridge 040463 on Clifton Road floods no homes are isolated. It adds approximately five minutes to emergency response times.

Flooding on Bridge 040093 on McNeil Road floods adds approximately five minutes to emergency services response times.

Bridge 040509 on Methodist Camp Road leads to a new addition to the NC State park system which contains no homes but does contain some structures. When the bridge floods, the entire park is inaccessible to emergency services.

Bridge 040480 on Ed Little Road adds approximately 6 minutes to emergency services response times.

Flooding on Bridge 040342 on Lou Jones Road (which is not on the grant request) completely isolates nine homes with no emergency services access.

Flooding on bridge 040296 on Campbell Road (which is not on the grant request) increases response to that area by approximately 15 minutes down a long winding narrow dirt road.

In addition to the impacts cited above, when any of these bridges flood, a vast amount of debris is deposited upon the bridges. This requires a significant amount of man-hours and resources from the NC Department of Transportation to remove and dispose of the debris and to verify the structural integrity of the bridges. I highly recommend all of these bridges be raised, when possible, to avoid life threatening situations in which citizens cannot be reached by emergency services organizations and to decrease the continued cost of debris removal.



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